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An Endless Ocean: An Analysis of Feminist Thought from 1963 to 2002

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As the American feminist movement has grown in the nation's consciousness and political awareness, the study and reference of this movement has often been categorized into three distinct 'waves'. The first wave is generally accepted to have begun at the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 where famous suffragettes such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott advocated for women's rights, most famously suffrage. The second wave, which is arguably the most recognized movement within feminism, began in the 1960's and '70's and lasted into the early 1980's. This wave was highly political and spawned so-called "superleaders" such as Gloria Steinem and Angela Davis. Although often caricaturized as man-hating, bra-burning frumps, the second wave was able to garner a myriad of legal rights for women, and, with the introduction of Women's Studies into academia, revamped the realm of feminist theory and philosophy. The third wave, although still difficult to cohesively define, began in the early 1990's in response to claims of living in a so-called 'postfeminist' society, the publishing of Susan Faludi's book *Backlash* which focused on the repercussions that American media/society wielded against the feminist movement, and the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas Senate Judiciary Hearings. Today's feminism is still considered part of the third-wave, with writers and activists emphasizing the underlying politics of everyday life and focusing on casting a wide net of social justice outside of women's rights.

Although relatively new, third-wave feminist theory has been widely publicized and taught alongside that of second-wave philosophy. Even as both segments of literature lay claim to what has been traditionally understood as American feminism, disagreements have arisen. The most noted poststructuralist third-wave writers identify themselves by rejecting the notions of what they perceive to be the essentialist philosophy of their feminist predecessors. In turn, some still active second-wave writers critique what they see as a movement made up of unfocused, self-involved young women who take their rights for granted. Educators and scholars cite these disagreements as

intergenerational conflict; a frigid older mother scolding her rebellious daughter. Both sides of the debate harbor well-meaning and intelligent women, but by retreating further into their 'wave' identifications, they are helping the patriarchy by marginalizing a movement and a philosophical field to which many have devoted their educations and lives.

For instance, the 1980's were touted by the media as the 'post-feminist' era. Feminist activity had reportedly died down due to lack of political positivity, particularly during the Reagan and Bush I years. However, the 1980's was the only decade so far that held two World Conferences on Women, saw the founding of the Fund for the Feminist Majority by Eleanor Smeal as well as the Women's Foreign Policy Council by Bell Abzug. In 1987, Wilma Mankiller became the first woman elected Principal Chief of the Cherokee nation of Oklahoma, and Congress passed a resolution declaring March as Women's History Month (Kinser 2004). Many women of color, including bell hooks, Cherrie Moraga, and Gloria Anzaldua, published influential works of feminist philosophy in this decade (Kinser 2004).

The 1980's wasn't the only victim of wave rhetoric. Throughout the feminist movement, women of various races, ethnicities, classes, religions, and educational backgrounds have contributed to feminist thought. Although these women and their words are more visible today, they were still present and potent in their original heyday. But because of the pervasiveness of white privilege in our society, the work most often recognized and legitimized is by white, middle-class women. Women of color who were active in the second -wave often speak of their feelings of condescension and tokenism within a movement that was purported to be liberating for all females. These women are rarely, if ever, mentioned by historical texts. All this activism, accomplishment, and glass-ceiling-cracking was going on in eras and through people that are largely forgotten because they were neglected a 'wave' categorization. Thusly, a strictly waved viewpoint of American feminism leads to a reductive and misleading portrayal of the continuous complexities of feminist thought.

Therefore, my question is this: would presenting feminist thought without wave categorization provide for a more cohesive

understanding of its history, tactics, and goals?

Literature Review

Scholars have recently written on the subject of the usefulness or dangers of using 'wave' rhetoric when speaking/teaching about the American feminist movement. Although some find value in the use of this type of categorization, most writers have found more negatives with this language. The pieces I read focused on the actual movement and 'doing' of feminism (read: physical activism, such as but not limited to marches, protests, lobbying, strategies, etc.) whereas I am applying these opinions to the realm of feminist theory from the early 1960's to the 2000's.

I was able to break down the literature I read into two categories: generational categorization and wave categorization in feminist activism.

The first article that focused on generational categorization was "Grrrls and Women Together in the Third Wave: Embracing the Challenges of Intergenerational Feminisms" by Jennifer Purvis. Her essay asks, "If current third-wave controversy continues to reify oppositions between the second and third waves of feminism, largely based on caricatures, or 'straw-feminisms', how can the grrrls and women who occupy the space of a 'third-wave political moment,' or a 'third-wave feminist consciousness,' accomplish the formidable tasks of feminism?" (Purvis 2004). Finding concern within the segmentation of feminist movements, Purvis writes, "Ultimately, the construction of a generational divide sets us apart and hierarchizes our relations, rather than situating us as equals who may have something to learn from one another" and "Rather than viewing new feminist strategies as a sign of potent individuation, feminisms that value contestation and an interweaving of strategies, both old and new, will build upon feminist resources and enact a feminist paradigm of exchange—one modeled on intersubjective relations that entail mediation and reciprocity, rather than conquest or overthrow." Clearly Purvis favors the notion of equality within the movement rather than a classifying model that is destined for infighting and unproductiveness.

Another addition to this section is the book *Not My Mother's Sister: Generational Conflict and Third-Wave Feminism* by Astrid Henry. She comments, "In other words, a cohesive generational unit is itself always a fiction…Even as we use the often-productive concept of generations, we must be wary of the ways in which it provides a reductive image of relationships between women, feminisms, and historical periods." Although she is referring to a different way of segmenting feminists, she still shares my hypothesis that looking at feminist theory from a distinctly separated viewpoint lets many accomplishments and amazing women fall through the cracks and allows rampant marginalization within the movement. She ends her book by saying, "When all our voices—and all of our various ways of being feminist—can be part of the dialogue, feminism will truly move forward" (Henry 2004, 180).

The final addition to this section is "American Electra: Feminism's Ritual Matricide" by Susan Faludi in the October edition of *Harper's Magazine.* Faludi writes, "When I first began writing about women's rights nearly two decades ago, I liked to say that feminism was the simply worded sign hoisted by a little girl in the 1970 Women's Strike for Equality : I AM NOT A BARBIE DOLL. Now I'm not so sure" (Faludi 2010, 30). She addresses various instances of ageism, towards both ends of the spectrum, in the recent National Organization for Women Presidential election, and Women's Studies Department-sponsored lectures at a myriad of schools. She compares the new feminists with the flappers of the 1920's who were fooled by consumerism that buried the mother to empower the daughter. She states, "These two legacies—the continued matricide and the shape-shifting contamination of commercialism and commercially infused relativism in feminist activism and scholarship—have created a generational donnybrook where the transmission of power repeatedly fails and feminist's heritage is repeatedly hurled onto the scrap heap. What gets passed on is the predisposition to dispossess, a legacy of no legacy" (Faludi 2010, 40). Although she does address how now-older feminists were quick to disregard their mothers when they were young, Faludi spends most of her time criticizing the actions and appearances of feminists now 40 years old and

younger. Faludi doesn't directly address waves, but the sentiment is there. Faludi seems to undervalue the fact that a movement needs to, well, move. After reading her article, it became very clear to me that focusing on the squabbles within feminism isn't very productive; it is time that feminists all trust each other to further advance and articulate their egalitarian convictions.

The second category, wave categorization in feminist activism, was well-exemplified by articles from authors Catherine Harnois and Krista Jacob with Adela Licona. Catherine Harnois's article for the *National Women's Studies Association Journal* entitled, "Re-presenting Feminisms: Past, Present, and Future" critiques both wave and generational rhetoric within the framework of feminist activism/movement. By drawing from a combination of quantitative and qualitative data, Harnois argues "...that third wave feminism might be better understood as an identity, rather than as a distinct theoretical perspective, age group, or cohort" (Harnois 2008). In a point that has specifically shaped my research, Harnois states, "A...problem with the wave metaphor, or perhaps more accurately, with the way it is used, is that wave rhetoric does not sufficiently allow for the growth, development, and revisions of feminist theories and theorists. In third wave rhetoric, second wave feminism is typically depicted as something static, as if the multiracial feminist critique of white bourgeois feminism, the rise of postmodernism, the development of new technologies, a changing global political environment, and the institutionalization of Women's Studies left the second wave completely unaffected" (Harnois 2008). Her hard data showed that, in terms of self-identification and potency of political issues, women of the new generation and women of the old generation were, at heart, not so different after all. In another segment of her paper, Harnois addresses the validity of the popular and ground-breaking anthologies that claimed to herald in the third wave. She investigates the guidelines that editors submitted to their essayists when asking for papers. Harnois found that these third wave anthologies, like all anthologies, are "strategically produced". She does not, however, think that this fact cheapens the legitimacy of the essayist's points and theories. She states, "My point, again, is not to minimize the importance of these anthologies, but rather to encourage feminist scholars and activists to see these anthologies for what they are: in-

sightful, thought provoking, and empowering essays, that have no doubt fostered feminist debate and feminist activism. They are not, however, representative of young women's feminism in any generalizable sense." Because the large amount of primary third wave sources I researched came from anthologies, Harnois's astute understanding of the politics of prose will help readjust my focus while reading.

In "Writing the Waves: A Dialogue on the Tools, Tactics, and Tensions of Feminisms and Feminist Practices Over Time and Place", authors Krista Jacob and Adela Licona comment on recent scholarship on the third wave of feminism in the *NWSA Journal.* As their piece progresses, the authors begin to focus on the well-publicized tension between second and third wave feminists. They state, "On the one hand, making a wave distinction is a useful theoretical and political tool for third-wave feminists. It allows us to separate ourselves from the generations before and after us, and it allows us to distinguish ourselves as a separate entity with a specific generational identity. This is especially important for third wavers since we are a generation that is often forgotten about. Most people remember the second wave and mistakenly equate feminism solely with that generation—bra burning, protest marches, and the sexual revolution. We are in decidedly good company, but we need to maintain a generational boundary. Likewise, when people refer to 'young' feminists, they are usually talking about women in their teens and early twenties, and skip over us completely. We're too old to be the new generation of feminists, yet we're too young to have the history, experience, and wisdom of those from the second wave. If we don't make a distinction, we'll drown in the second wave, or worse, the mainstream media's sexualizing appropriation of feminism" (Jacob and Licona 2005). The authors condone wave rhetoric in order to establish an identity while simultaneously admitting that their age group does not fall neatly into a predetermined wave of feminism. The authors also draw on the plight of the African American feminists who are continually left out of the dialogue because their work was executed in between the well-known waves. Overall, both Jacob and Licona acknowledge the confusion and dissatisfaction that waved viewpoints cause for those on the margins.

Methodology

The history of feminist theory is rich, complex, and lengthy. Even by narrowing my research to only American feminist scholars, I am left with thousands of volumes of work. Although it pleases me to know that so many people have been influenced enough by feminism to articulate its nuances within the realm of academia, I only had one semester to tackle an intricate philosophical canon. Therefore, I selected 10 books, two from each decade spanning from the 1960's to the 2000's. I selected these particular books by comparing various "Must-Read/Most Influential Books on Feminism" (see bibliography) and picking the two from each decade that appeared most often. It was a difficult task and I was inclined to select a higher number of books, but again, I only had a few months to research and write. I also wanted to focus on texts that specifically talk about or define American feminism. With that fact remaining paramount in my mind, my choices of books are: *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) by Betty Friedan, *Sexual Politics* (1969) by Kate Millet, selected essays from *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement* (1970) edited by Robin Morgan, *The Dialectic of Sex* (1971) by Shulamith Firestone, *Women, Culture, and Politics* (1983) by Angela Davis, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984) by bell hooks, selected essays from *Listen Up.: Voices from the Next Feminist Generation* (1995) edited by Barbara Findlen, selected essays from *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism* (1997) edited by Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake, *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future* (2000) edited by Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, and selected essays from *Colonize This! Young Women of Color on Today's Feminism* (2002) edited by Daisy Hernandez and Bushra Rehman. The books from the 1960's to the 1970's would traditionally be viewed as second wave, the books from the 1980's were not given a wave, the 1990's would be viewed as third-wave, and the books from the 2000's, although not explicitly mentioned, are still considered third-wave. Likewise, writers from the 1960's to the 1980's will be considered part of the 'older generation' and writers from the 1990's and 2000's as the 'younger generation'.

I read these texts with three analytical markers: 1) How does the personal become political for these writers/what event(s)

triggered their feminist activism? 2) How varied is the voice of this author from those represented in the mainstream media (i.e. white, middle class, heterosexual)? 3) How do these authors view equality?

I used these markers to analyze how these differences or similarities would manifest themselves over the decades. Would the answers be equally distributed or heavy tailed in either direction? Would all feminists be alike, or would each author be radically different from all others? I hypothesized that feminist theory, regardless of decade or wave, has always been rife with a myriad of different viewpoints and tactics. I also hypothesize that, even when placed in a generational scope, older and younger authors will have more ideas and values in common than in contrast.

Limitations

In the previous section I addressed the fact that my pool of resources was smaller than what I would have preferred, due to the short amount of time allotted to finish the project. This, among a few other factors acted as limitations to this study. Another caveat was the issue of publication. Perhaps certain voices weren't heard because the authors didn't have the means to publish their work. I believe this also factors into the question of class, which could be a whole other paper in and of itself. Also, some decades in my study were exemplified by anthologies, whiles others were represented by a whole, single or double-author text. Although I don't find this variation to be detrimental to the paper, I remind myself of Catherine Harnois's warning about anthologies; although they are informational, interesting, and well-written, they are often put together with an agenda in mind. Although these limitations did present challenges, I believe this paper represents a stepping stone for larger and more intensive research into the decadal study of feminist thought.

Findings

In opposition to the widely-held supposition that all feminists are the same, my research has proven my first hypothesis, showing that feminist authors have always been a diverse group, even from those writing in the same decade or time-span. My second hypothesis, that older and younger feminists will have more in

common than in contrast was also proven, but in different degrees. At the risk of sounding confusing, the main similarities these authors have lie in their differences. The ways of coming to feminism, the identities of these feminists, and their views of achieving equality have not been monolithically different per decade, wave, or generation. Feminists across the 40 years of analysis have all shared different ideas of equality; an author in the 1970s might have more in common with an author from the 1990s than to her own contemporary. And although diversity in identity didn't really explode until the 1990s and 2000s, it is obvious that women of different ethnicities, religions, and sexual orientations existed and were articulating their ideas about feminism in decades previous.

'The Click'

In 1972, Jane O'Reilly wrote an article for the first issue of *Ms.* Magazine, articulating what she named "the click". This "click" was the moment of truth when women felt the instant sisterhood of feminist consciousness; when they first fully understood and experienced the depths of women's oppression. Because I am exploring the ways in which these feminist scholars connect and confer, I want to compare their individual "clicks"; their moments of feminist rebirth.

Within this category I sorted the authors into 4 subcategories: Education, Family, Identity and Previous Activism, and Without Direct Statement/Inferred.

The majority of the authors first discovered feminism within educational institutions. In the third chapter of *The Feminine Mystique,* Betty Friedan describes the apprehension she and women of her generation faced when thinking about the future. As a graduating senior at Smith, Friedan had just received a graduate fellowship. Although she accepted the fellowship, she questioned whether it was the right thing for her, as a woman, to do. While working on her doctorate, she fell in love and was subsequently rejected by her mate due to her intellectual status. Shortly after, she dropped the program and her dreams of becoming a psychologist. She postulates:

> I never could explain, hardly knew myself, why I gave up this career. I lived in the present, working on newspapers with no particular plan. I married, had children, lived according to the feminine mystique as a suburban housewife. But still the question haunted me. I could sense no purpose in my life, I could find no peace, until I finally faced it and worked out my own answer (Friedan 1963, 70).

Friedan never questioned her purpose or her identity until faced with the prospect of choosing between educational enlightenment or cultural norms. She returned to Smith to speak to some members of the class 1959, finding that 17 years later, women were still grappling with the same issues. Many of the women were already engaged; this, one single senior pointed out, garnered great jealousy. These women didn't need to fret about their futures; they had it made with marital bliss. However, this same senior also knew that the fiancées of '59 felt lost in a different sense. They endured 16 years of education only to spend the rest of their mortal days mopping, laundering, and mothering (Friedan 1963, 70-71). This prompted Friedan to further explore this notion of the feminine mystique, the cultural suppositions that forced women into mindless housewifery, and ways for women to overcome this struggle.

Thirty-two years later in *Listen Up: Voices from the Next Feminist Generation,* Veronica Chambers tells her story of feminism in the essay "Betrayal Feminism". Chambers explains that although she was surrounded by strong black women in her family, she didn't have her feminist awakening until college. Like many of the authors of these essays, this was a double-edged sword. Chambers was inspired by the writings of Simone de Beauvoir, Alice Walker, Gloria Steinem and Barbara Smith. Serendipitously, "My first year, Barbara Smith gave a lecture, and for me, she was like a silver-screen apparition. Black a*nd* feminist—a rare bird that I had only read about and never actually seen"(Chambers 1995, 23). However, her college experience showed her another side of feminism:

> My junior year, I was awarded a women's studies scholarship to complement the "minority" scholarship that had enabled me to attend this expensive college in the first place. Outside

> of class, I became active in both "minority" student groups and the wimmin's center. Often at the wimmin's center, I'd be one of only a handful of women of color. I tried to persuade my black friends to come, but they just weren't interested. Little by little, I became frustrated with being the token black at women's activities (Chambers 1995, 25).

The notion of being tokenized within women's studies programs was also shared by author JeeYeun Lee in her essay, also from *Listen Up...*, entitled "Beyond Bean Counting". Lee's very first encounter with feminism was, aptly enough, in Feminist Studies 101 at her alma mater. The intricacies of feminist thought and the dialogue of her classmates opened up an entirely new way of thinking for Lee, but still, she felt left out. She writes:

> I knew "women of color" was supposed to include Asian American women, but I could not find any in the class readings. Were there no Asian American feminists? Were there none who could write in English? Did there even exist older Asian American women who were second or third generation? Were we Asian American students in the class the first to think about feminism? A class about women, I thought, was a class about me, so I looked for myself everywhere and found nothing (Lee 1997, 206).

Like Chambers, her disheartening experience with feminism inspired her to fight to make it better and more inclusive.

For other writers, their education experience was solely a positive in determining their feminism. Jennifer Myhre is one of these authors. Although Jennifer states she had been a feminist since childhood, she articulates her rebirth coming during her college years. She discovered Kate Millet, Alice Walker, and the issue of what it means to look/act/feel/be feminine. She writes, "Some of us come to feminism because of abuse, harassment, eating disorders. I came to feminism because I hated shaving my legs" (Myhre 1995, 133). After escaping the trappings of culturally prescribed gender roles, Myhre took her new-found feminism and created a campus organization that fought to end sexual assault.

Authors Annalee Newitz and Jillian Sandell, two of the four authors of "Masculinity Without Men: Women Reconciling Feminism and Male Identification" in *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism*, speak highly of their college experiences as well. Both authors are biologically women, but experiment or live as men. However, they regard typical notions of gender as unimportant and meaningless. When discussing the question of what made them feminists, Newitz cited graduate school and Sandell cited undergraduate experience. Newitz never explored the nuances of feminism, and was, somewhat ironically, brought to it by male friends of hers. By learning and witnessing through popular culture as to what it meant to be a female body in that time, Newitz began to identify as both male and queer (Cox, Johnson, Newitz, and Sandell 1997, 193-194). Sandell enrolled as a women's studies major in college before actually understanding feminism, but quickly became engrossed after taking a class on the ways in which gender is socially constructed. Sandell says, "...it was like the veils were lifted from my eyes; suddenly a lot of things in my life started to make sense" (Heywood and Drake 1997, 194).

Other women fostered feminist roots through strong family members. Jennifer Baumgardner, co-writer of *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future*, reminisces about her "stay-at-home mom, who somehow made it clear that is wasn't her *job* to make dinner or pick us up from basketball or dance class the minute we called" (Baumgardner and Richards 2000, xvi-xvii). Her forward thinking mother learned feminism "from *Ms.*, her women's group, reading Marilyn French's novel *The Women's Room*, and most of all, from her own life" (Baumgardner and Richards 2000, xvii). Nigerian-born Ijeoma A. had a different view of her family and their affect on her feminism. Raised by a family from rural villages of Eastern Nigerian, Ijeoma's upbringing was laced with traditional customs and expectations of women. Her family prescribed to her four main rules to live by: the woman's office is the kitchen, the woman is responsible for all the chores in the home, she is accountable for the children and their actions, and she must pledge complete and total allegiance to the man in charge first, before herself (Ijeoma 2002, 216). Even though she was a young girl, she understood that washing dishes and

mopping while her brothers watched soccer and slept in was not right. Her eventual move to America cemented these beliefs and helped her reconcile her feminist viewpoints with the love she had for her family and her homeland.

Pat Mainardi became a feminist because of and *for* her family. She dedicates her 1970 essay "The Politics of Housework" to her mother, grandmother, and four aunts who "have collectively put in over two hundred years of housework" (Mainardi 1970, 598). The essay, which appears in the 1970 anthology, *Sisterhood is Powerful,* provides a biting and sardonic translation of men's comments about housework and how the liberated woman can combat these situations.

Additional authors came to feminism through their particular, often identity-driven bouts of activism outside of feminist movement. In 1955, Gene Damon started an organization, The Daughters of Bilitis, Inc., which in turn published a newspaper, *The Ladder,* which focused on the lives and rights of lesbians (Damon 1970, 298). By advocating for sexual freedom, Damon discovered an obvious bedfellow (pun intended) in feminism.

Also featured in *Sisterhood is Powerful,* Enriqueta Longaeux y Vasquez speaks of her identity-driven feminism. In her essay "The Mexican-American Woman", Longaeux y Vasquez details the trials and tribulations of the women of La Raza, "the race" of people in the US who are descended from the American Indians and the Spanish colonialists (Longaeux y Vasquez 1970, 379). She writes:

> While attending a Mexican-American conference in Colorado this year, I went to one of the workshops that were held to discuss the role of the Chicana—the Mexican-American woman, the woman of La Raza. When the time came for the women to report to the full conference, the only thing that the workshop representative had to say was this: 'It was the consensus of the group that the Chicana woman does not want to be liberated' (Longaeux y Vasquez 1970, 379).

Vasquez knew from her own personal experiences that this statement could not be wholly true. Her essay expounds on her fight to bring equality to the brothers and sisters of La Raza.

The 2002 anthology *Colonize This! Young Women of Color on Today's Feminism* features many essays on identity politics and feminism, however few are as poignant as Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's essay "browngirlworld: queergirlofcolor organizing, sistahood, heartbreak". Born to a white mother and a Sri Lankan father in Worcester, Massachusetts, Piepzna-Samarasinha's childhood was understandably turbulent. She describes, "I was a brown kinky-headed full-lipped girl in apartheid Massachusetts, white boys chasing me down the street to try and fuck the hot Latina they saw, with browning colonial family photos locked up in trunks, simmering electric heat lightning silences exploding whenever I asked the obvious questions" (Piepzna-Samarasinha 2002, 5). As she grew older, she turned her confusion into activism, "I grew up in the Reagan eighties dreaming of apocalypse and revolution, knowing we would fight and win it all or die. I fled to many activist scenes, looking for that place. Anarcho-punk as a kid, riot-grrrl, anti-Giuliani, anti-cop, anti-Contract on America ass-kicking in general" (Piepzna-Samarasinha 2002, 5). Further delving into the question of her sexuality helped her become a strong and active feminist who refused to simply live in her chosen communities, but analyzed and learned from them.

On the other side of the country, author Nomy Lamm was also finding a revolution within. Her essay "It's a Big Fat Revolution" in *Listen Up...* explains how difficult life as a "fat" and handicapped woman can be in American society. Throughout her life, her family, the media, and her culture told her that by being fat that she was not attractive, therefore would never be successful, happy, or loved. Being the punk rocker that she is, Lamm refused to believe this. Feminism was the first institution she found which shared this same ideal. But Lamm wants to stretch feminism further; she calls for a total upheaval of cultural values in terms of physical beauty and societal worth. How? "My body is fucking beautiful, and every time I look in the mirror and acknowledge that, I am contributing to the revolution" (Lamm 1995, 90).

Still, there were quite a few texts that I read that did not give an explicit answer as to how the authors became feminists. Examples are *The Dialectic of Sex* by Shulamith Firestone, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* by bell hooks, *Women, Culture, and Politics* by Angela Davis, "A Tale of Two Feminisms: Power and Victimization in Contemporary Feminist Debate" by Carolyn Sorisio (featured in *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism"),* and other contributors to anthologies. Even though the authors do not give the reason why they became feminists, some reasons or identities can be inferred. Firestone, for instance, advocates abolishing patriarchy by completely changing the system of childbirth and the traditional notion of families. Also, when naming the subsets of feminists within the Women's Liberation Movement, she gives the deepest meaning and the full support to radical feminists. One could easily discern that Firestone advocated for radical feminist ideals and true revolution (Firestone 1970, 32). Angela Davis and bell hooks both advocate for their fellow black women, as well as for a more inclusive and less class-based feminist movement. Sorisio and other authors write about feminism from a purely academic perspective, giving no discernable clues to their identities other than the biographies provided in anthologies. However, it does infer that they are educated women, and, according to earlier articulations in this section, were likely to have experienced their rebirth in school.

In summary, authors from all decades came to feminism in similar ways. However, when comparing younger feminists to older feminists, it is quite evident that in the categories of education and activism, younger writers were heavily influenced by older feminists. Many cited specific activists and writers from older generations as key factors in their feminist realization. My hypotheses hold true here, but nuances are beginning to arise. Older writers are finding their "clicks" through more organic means, where as younger feminists are building their identities from the words and actions of those same exact older writers.

Varied Voices

Feminism has often been accused of being a movement solely for white, upper-middle class, heterosexual women. To an ex-

tent, this stereotype is true. More often than not, the faces seen in the media representing a cause for all women are white-washed. Certain authors in my data collection, namely Betty Friedan, helped further along thus summation. This is said not to downplay Friedan's work. It's not as if the women spoken about in *The Feminine Mystique* did not deserve liberation; of course they did. Friedan simply abided by the well-known writer's rule: write about what you know. Friedan, a white, middle-class, married, college-educated part-time housewife knew how to relate to other women in similar situations, just like her contemporary, Frances M. Beal could relate to the other black women in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (Beal 1970, 340).

Analyzing the texts, I found a healthy variation throughout the decades in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, gender-identification, sexuality, political affiliation, as well as differences in opinion on traditional feminist topics such as sex, abortion, and sisterhood. However, the differences are nuanced within their decades. Friedan and Millet had very few differences in identities; both are white, middle-class, and well educated. The 1970's opened the door to more inclusion; Shulamith Firestone, while still white, educated, and middle-class, was born in Canada and raised as an Orthodox Jew (Shulamith Firestone Biography 2010). Robin Morgan's *Sisterhood...* anthology features women of color, lesbians, sex workers, high school women, and women representing traditionally male-dominated professions. The 1980's are represented by two black women, bell hooks and Angela Davis. Although not explicitly known and spoken of in *Women, Culture, and Politics,* Davis is a lesbian (Angela Y. Davis 2010). hooks also differentiates herself by supporting feminism but not as it had previously been modeled. Coming out swinging, hooks writes in the first chapter "Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory":

> Feminism in the United States has never emerged from the women who are most victimized by sexist oppression; women who are daily beaten down, mentally, physically, and spiritually—women who are powerless to change their condition in life. They are a silent majority. A mark of their victimization is that they accept their lot in life without visible question, without organized protest, without collective anger

> or rage. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* is still heralded as having paved the way for contemporary feminist movement—it was written as if these women did not exist (hooks 1984, 1).

Davis writes that feminism needs to reflect "the often unarticulated interests and aspirations of masses of women of all racial backgrounds" (Davis 1984, 6). These include more tangible issues such as unemployment, homelessness, and anti-immigration legislation, as well as tackling sociological issues such as homophobia, ageism, and able-bodyism (Davis 1984, 6). With diversity being brought to the forefront of feminist discussion, feminist theory in the 1990's and 2000's explodes with variances. In *Listen Up*, Cheryl Green, Lisa Tiger, JeeYeun Lee, and Sonja Curry-Johnson all tell stories of a feminist life lived outside the 'typical' activist's norm.

Cheryl Green's essay, "One Resilient Baby" illustrates her struggle to be black, visibly disabled, and a feminist. Tormented by peers and family, Green didn't realize a black woman could be a feminist until her early twenties, and then still couldn't find any traces of disabled women or support for disabled women in any sort of feminist text. Furthermore, her particular difference made her question certain "feminist fundamentals":

> Although my friend at Yale had told me that no one holds the reins of feminism, I didn't believe her. I struggled with reconciling some so-called "feminist fundamentals" with my beliefs as a person with a disability. The issue of abortion embodies this conflict. I'm certainly a proponent of women's rights, equality and personal choice. However, I am acutely aware that abortion is used as a means to root out those whom society deems imperfect and unworthy of life. Sadly, many women and men believe that having an abortion is the only sensible response to news of carrying a fetus with a disability....I discussed my concerns with my friend, and I was told that I was challenging a "feminist fundamental." I was made to feel like a traitor (Green 1995, 142-3).

In a somewhat similar fashion, Native American author Lisa Tiger discusses her issues with rectifying her heritage, her feminism, and her status as an HIV-positive person. Daughter of well-known Native American artist Jerome Tiger and proud member of the Cherokee Nation, Lisa Tiger was aloof and lost as to her purpose in life. Long after their break-up, Tiger ran into her ex long-time boyfriend who, for someone was always muscular and healthy, looked ill and puny. Confused, she mentioned this to a gay friend of hers who admitted that he had slept with Tiger's boyfriend while they were still dating. Suspecting the worse, Tiger went to her family doctor for an HIV test. Tiger, like most Americans in 1992, had thought of HIV and AIDS as something that affected drug users in urban coast areas. Lisa had lived in her Midwestern Native American community all her life, had never used drugs and had only been in two long-term and what she thought were monogamous relationships. What would break most people inspired Lisa to take action. With the help of Wilma Mankiller, the first female leader of Cherokee nation, Lisa launched a career of activism, speaking to Native American communities about what it means to love their heritage and themselves (Tiger 1995, 197-204).

Sonja Curry-Johnson is yet another author whose identity as a black Christian feminist housewife was at odds with traditional feminist dogma. Writing a passage that would probably confuse yet enlighten Betty Friedan, Curry-Johnson writes:

> Outside the family hub, however, are the old familiar rumblings. Because of the traditional façade of our relationship, friends and family tend to comment on what they assume is my abandonment of my feminist beliefs. At this time in our lives, my husband is working outside the home while I stay at home with our son and daughter, a joint decision arrived at after consideration of financial, geographical and time-frame conditions. My high school friends tease me constantly, amused at the firebrand feminist turned "little mother." They conveniently forget that my husband was the primary caregiver for our son when he was first born, enabling me to finish the first semester of my last year of school with peace of mind. They also fail to recall that when my

> husband had to relocate because of his military career and I could not immediately join him because I was still in school, I single-handedly cared for the baby while finishing my last undergraduate semester in a blaze of grade-point glory. They don't hear my husband urging me to get into a graduate program and to finish the "Great American Novel" I've been working on for eons (Curry-Johnson 1995, 226-7).

Instead of experiencing a "problem with no name", also known as listlessness, boredom, and a sense of under appreciation, Curry-Johnson wields her power as an educated housewife to further the scope of feminism. She defines herself by many different markers, and is frustrated that she can't just be accepted for all of them, as one whole person, by a typical feminist community. But as witnessed by the progression of diversity within feminist thought, Curry-Johnson should realize she shares more in common with her feminist peers than she thinks.

With all this new diversity flooding the feminist ranks, writer JeeYuen Lee cautions not to view it as tokenism, or as President Bill Clinton put it, 'bean counting' (Lee 1995, 205). As an Asian-American, she encountered no women of color in her Intro to Feminism class at Stanford. Almost ready to give up, she took classes on women of color in feminism and found solace that she was not alone, even though she still couldn't find any Asian-American feminist scholars on the syllabus. However, it led her to activism against marginalization within feminist groups. She says:

> At one extreme, I have seen groups that deny the marginalizing affects of the practices, believing that issues of inclusion really have nothing to do with their specific agendas. At the other extreme, I have seen groups ripped apart by accusations of political correctness, immobilized by guilt, knowing they should address a certain issue but not knowing how to begin, and still wondering why "women of color just don't come to our meetings"...Those of us who have been aware of our tokenization often become suspicious and tired of educating others, wondering if we are invested enough to

continue to do so, wondering is the overall goal is worth it (Lee 1995, 208-9).

Lee urges the reader to discard any assumption about women she may have. This is difficult, but in Lee's mind, necessary. She ends her piece saying "This thing called 'feminism' takes a great deal of hard work, and I think this is one of the primary hallmarks of young feminists' activism today: We realize that coming together and working together are by no means natural or easy" (Lee 1995, 211).

Jetting into the 21st century, feminism is still found to be increasingly diverse.

Pandora Leong picks up where Lee leaves off. In her *Colonize This!* essay, "Living Outside the Box", Leong recounts her experiences as an Asian feminist lesbian, born and raised in Alaska but currently living in New York City. Her feminism has led her to analyze the isolation, class conflicts, and 'model-minority' assumptions that she has faced; she sees her clear status as an educated middle-class person when comparing her life to that of the homeless man beckoning for a dollar on her subway car, and understands that because she possesses the vocabulary of a Ph.D. she can give the cops attitude when they assume she is a young male punk lurking around in 'family neighborhoods' (Leong 2002, 344-7). Yet, she feels terrified at the marginalization of Asian American women who are assigned "the personality—and autonomy—of an inflatable doll" through the Western culture that prizes their exoticness and stereotypical portrayals (Leong 2002, 350). She also battles marginalization in terms of outward appearance and sexuality:

> While I only pass for white on the phone, I only pass for male in person. The local barber cuts my hair. I wear suits from the men's department. Comfort instigated these habits, but people read them as gender signifiers…I am mistaken for male far more readily than I am recognized as queer. As an Asian female, my desires are dismissed, trivialized and denied more than white women because I am fighting the fronts of both culture and gender (Leong 2002, 352).

When many people would prefer she change, Leong defiantly states that she is proud not to pass. Instead, she advocates for defining one's self outside of societal expectations in order to become "visible and redefine the box—or throw it away all together" (Leong 2002, 353).

Also engaged in the search for visibility and acceptance, Susan Muaddi Darraj explores her middle-eastern heritage in "It's Not an Oxymoron: The Search for an Arab Feminism". Raised by an Arab Christian father who, without knowing the term, raised his daughter as a feminist. As Darraj grew up, she started noticing that Arab feminists were rare, and that western feminism had a complete misunderstanding about Arab women.

> Why did Americans equate Muslim women with veils so completely, and why did the cameras seem to pick out only these women? The answer is an uncomplicated one: because this was the quaint vision of the Middle East with which Americans felt comfortable. This vision included heavily robed and mustachioed sheiks, belly dancers, tents, camels and—of course—veiled women (Darraj 2002, 297).

She continues:

The apparent hypocrisy and condescension that white Western feminists held for Arab women confused me. I felt betrayed by a movement that claimed to create a global sisterhood of women it seemed that the Arab woman was the poor and downtrodden stepsister in this family. Where was my feminism? (Darraj 2002, 298).

Following a similar trend, Darraj felt alienated by mainstream understandings of feminism and takes action to change it.

As stated above, these examples show the diversity of all identity markers through the decades of feminism. However, variances grew quickly as time progressed. This relates to the findings for the section on 'the click', where women of younger generations can better articulate their identities and their passions by building upon those of women who came before them. This does not solely include younger women agreeing with older women, either. bell

hooks takes the feminism of Betty Friedan and critiques it, eventually reshaping it into a feminism that is more friendly for women like herself. Although the two come from different backgrounds, hooks' work would not be as rich had it not been for Friedan. And as one voice became known, more women of different backgrounds could speak up, moving the ideas forward and tweaking them until they worked for the handfuls of different population segments.

Achieving Equality

Although many of the authors differ from the mainstream expectations of a feminist, they all still advocate for a similar goal: equality. The question is, have differences arisen as to how to achieve equality, or have tactics remained the same throughout the decades? The texts show a surprising amount of variation within decades. Rather than old dogma working against new, the writers often held different opinions on the matter than those of their contemporaries.

Kate Millet, writing in her 1970 work *Sexual Politics,* does scholarly analysis on the way in which women and women's sexuality is portrayed through literature and art. She found, through the works of such notable authors as D.H. Lawrence and Henry Miller, that women are often over-sexualized and objectified to the point of no longer being considered human. She also found that women's sexual pleasure was considered taboo, mostly due to the fears of America's Puritanical society and the focus on male sexuality being considered healthy, natural, and virile (Millet 1970, 100). Millet expresses her views on achieving equality:

> Only with the relaxation of sexual mores and the lifting of the major prohibitions against woman's pleasure in sexuality, together with the changes which the first phase of the sexual revolution had brought about in social attitudes and in her social position—changes so deep and pervasive that even the ensuing period of reaction could not erase their effect—only then could the potential capacity of the female's sexuality reassert itself in any general way. Yet while placing the greatest emphasis on social changes which afforded women education, divorce, economic independence, and the greater

> social freedom, one need not underestimate the influence of increased physiological understanding and improved sexual technique (Millet 1970, 119-120).

Millet believes that women can only be free when their bodies and their sexualities are safe, celebrated, and readily explored. For her, equality is found in the bedroom.

Betty Friedan's suggestion is for women to leave their place as a housewife and find a meaningful job. She writes:

> But even if a woman does not have to work to eat, she can find identity only in work that is of real value to society—work for which, usually, our society pays. Being paid is, of course, more than a reward. It implies a definite commitment (Friedan 1963, 346).

Friedan links the capitalist system to the ultimate freedom for women. Only seven years later, Shulamith Firestone vehemently disagrees. Firestone offers four demands to create an alternative system that would be conducive to a women's liberation revolution. These are, "the freeing of women from the tyranny of their reproductive biology by every means available, and the diffusion of the childbearing and childrearing role to the society as a whole, men as well as women" ,"The full self-determination, including economic independence, of both women and children", "the total integration of women and children into all aspects of the larger society", and "the freedom of all women and children to do whatever they wish to do sexually" (Firestone 1970, 206-9). Whereas Friedan envisioned a society where women could find and cultivate their identities and families through work and the Capitalist system, Firestone advocates for the destruction of the biological family, the abolishment of traditional notions of childhood, creating a feminist socialist society, and reverting back to a polymorphous sexuality for all.

Although bell hooks echoes Firestone's class-based scrutiny of American society, she has a radically different approach to achieving equality. Her views on biological family:

> During the early stages of contemporary women's liberation movement, feminist analyses of motherhood reflected the

> race and class biases of participants. Some white, middle-class, college-educated women argued that motherhood was a serious obstacle to women's liberation, a trap confining women to the home, keeping them ties to cleaning, cooking, and child care. Others simply identified motherhood and child-rearing as the locus of women's oppression. Had black women voiced their views on motherhood, it would not have been named a serious obstacle to our freedom as women. Racism, lack of jobs, lack of skills or education, and a number of other issues would have been at the top of the list—but not motherhood (hooks 1984, 133).

That being said, hooks still values a break in the overarching system of oppression. For hooks, feminist revolution and equality can only be reached if feminists learn to value every woman and her respective life. Feminists need to reach out to men and help them smash the patriarchal system, rather than blaming all of them for oppression which, in turn, makes many women squeamish about joining the movement. She says, "While we must recognize, acknowledge, and appreciate the significance of feminist rebellion and the women (and men) who made it happen, we must be willing to criticize, re-examine, and begin feminist work anew…" (hooks 1984, 165).

The 1990's and 2000's share a common understanding. Like hooks and Firestone (but in different fashions), the writers believed that the system needs a drastic change. But because these authors are young (ranging from high-school age to mid-twenties) they don't feel the need to discuss the political dynamics of families or the listlessness of being a housewife. Rather these women advocate for a more individual-based awakening to contribute to equality. Christine Doza's essay "Bloodlove" discusses her all-consuming anger at the inequalities she sees. For her, equality means recognizing the oppression around her and doing something about it:

> I don't need to be told what band is the cutest, what hairstyle is the most fashionable, what brand of clothes is the coolest. I need to know that every minute of every day I am being colonized, manipulated and ignored, and that minute

> by minute I am doing this to others who are not shining white and middle class. There's a system of abuse here. I need to know what part I'm playing in it (Doza 1995, 253).

Baumgarnder and Richards, writing in 2000, also favor a re-examination of societal expectations and the world between men and women. They write:

> A false assumption about equality is that it means inserting some women into traditional men's roles and vice versa. Therefore women could break the glass ceiling and men would therefore have to be relegated to the sticky floors of low-wage jobs. Men could become homemakers and women the Wednesday golfer. But this would replace one set of inequalities with another and not change the system at all—which of course is not equality (Baumgardner and Richards 2000, 81).

According to these authors, "equality means social transformation. It means raising the floor" (Baumgardner and Richards 2000, 82). Again we see a call for a complete upheaval of the current system. What is most interesting is that these younger women often came to feminism by learning about the community of feminists in history. Knowing that they enjoy more power and access because of the blood and sweat shed by other feminists, many of these younger authors believe that equality can be achieved by harnessing this new power and using it to re-define the world around them. shani jamila writes:

> The knowledge is my ammunition and I join with [older feminists] and my peers to continue fighting those battles and the other fronts unique to our time. We can't get complacent. The most important thing we can do as a generation is to see our new positions as power and weapons to be used strategically in the struggle rather than as spoils of war. Because this shit is far from over (jamila 2002, 394).

Various views about achieving equality and what it means have existed throughout the decades, but have, more or less, been built on and around each other. Echoing the analyses from the

previous sections, without one feminist voice, we wouldn't have another. Some authors believe equality can be achieved by working through the system, others believe true egalitarianism cannot exist unless the system is completely changed. Either way, all agree that equality is a noble goal that is essential for the success and empowerment of all women. It is also evident that these views have existed throughout the decades, and that variation isn't confined to one segment of the population.

Conclusion

Analyzing this data without the framework of 'waves' and 'generations' has led to a more cohesive understanding of feminism and the tactics within the movement. Although wave categorization can be a helpful way of studying feminism, particularly in terms of tangible activism, my findings show that feminist thought comes across more as an endless ocean than a few powerful but receding waves splashing against a patriarchal shore. Generational categorization can be helpful, but only when used to explore the ways in which feminism has built upon itself. This paper has clearly shown that each author relies on the one before her, and that even if they aren't in total agreement, the authors still work in tandem. I have found that researching by decade has been quite beneficial. It allows for a freer exploration of feminist thought, without the mother/daughter (wiser/more naïve; hard-working/ungrateful) complex that comes with generational thinking. By reading by decade, no authors are left out, historical context makes greater sense, and the evolution (as well as the achievements) of feminism are more clearly defined and identified. Perhaps professors or editors of anthologies on feminism would find that educating others on feminist thought using the decade model would showcase the ever-progressing smart and thoughtful work of feminist authors well into the 21st century.

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